



Library podcast

Clarion West presents Karen Lord

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[00:00:36] Good evening. My name is Misha Stone I'm a Reader Services librarian here at The Seattle Public Library. Thank you for coming tonight. Thank you for joining us. I always love the Clarion West summer reader series both because I'm on the board now but you'll hear more about the board in a moment. But also just because I love meeting all of the authors who are here as instructors for the six week residential program it is lovely to have Karen Lord here tonight and as well as the 18 students here who are writing away. So thank you. Before I turn the program over to Klarion West a few items of business. This event is supported by the Seattle Public Library Foundation author series sponsor Gary Kunis and media sponsor the Seattle Times and presented in partnership with the university bookstore. Thank you Dwayne and Lily by books. And now I am turning the podium over to Mnisi shall I

[00:01:47] Mnisi shawl also known as Denise Tangela shawl.

[00:01:51] Clarine West board member and lake I have this speech here that you guys all know so I'm not going to ask you to sing along but I'm tempted.

[00:02:07] Is there anyone here that does not know what Klarion West is.

[00:02:14] Right. I can skip that part. OK. Is there anyone here that does not know that it is funded in part by tuition but only in part. I'm not seeing any hands OK. All right. And is there anyone here who does not know what to write a thon is you do too.

[00:02:42] You know what the right a thon is. OK but just for form's sake I will say that the right Afon is like a marathon except we're not mirroring we're writing.

[00:02:54] We're writing and editing and revising and submitting and doing writerly stuff.

[00:03:02] There are a bunch of us here who are doing this and we're hoping that by doing it very publicly garner support for Klarion West pledges.

[00:03:14] We all have pledged goals. We all have. Writing goals and they you can find out about them on the Clarion West website. You just want to go to the right section of the Clarion West org. And there you will find me. And who else who else is doing the right fun. Okay well that's pretty good. That's a decent showing. Yeah. So we're all doing things and some of us are giving things away. In addition to just saying aren't we cool. Please support us. Is there anyone doing what's called a Tukur ization this year. Yeah yeah. Tucker's station is where for a nominal fee you get eternal immortality you get put into a story by Jay Stein Bakare for instance.

[00:04:12] Yeah so so check that out.

[00:04:17] Of course this year you know you want to do donations to the Southern Christian southern No sorry Southern Poverty.

[00:04:28] Thank you. I give them money but I can't even remember what SBL stands for. And places like that.

[00:04:35] But you know you also want to give money to us because we're writing your funny anti Trump screeds and pieces where like Ruth Bader Ginsburg clones herself and stuff.

[00:04:51] So please support that. I will think at this point the NEA King County for culture Amazon and the Seattle office of arts and culture. And let's see. A while back we had a slide showing a few other people that were supporting Clarine West End the write a thon including Bill spy elves underground tours. Who else.

[00:05:19] Third third place books bricks and mortar books. So these are all important pillars of our community. The largest percentage of the donors are individuals like you of course.

[00:05:35] Let's see. I think that's everything I wanted to say. Oh yes. I was told that if I could get the students that are in this year's class to stand up they would do a cancan because they're all in a line. Is that right.

[00:06:01] There we go. All right thanks you very very much.

[00:06:07] That's it. Onto the onto the. Rest of the actual show and the aforementioned J.

[00:06:21] All right. If anyone wants to you know kroons some ethereal space songs. No kidding in the background. Sort of a chorus. All right Karen Lord is a Barbadian author academic and research consultant. Her varied interests are as rich as her worlds and her past vocations include teaching physics serving as a diplomat and training soldiers. Lourdes award winning novels include redemption and Indigo the best of all possible worlds and the Galaxy game. In 2012 she was nominated for the John double can't John W. Campbell Award. Lorde has also edited new worlds Oldways speculative tales from the Caribbean and is part of the writing team for Seasons 3 and 4 of

the serial fiction for Montane with reviewer Karen Burnam. She produces the podcast SBF crossing the Gulf in which the two discuss international contemporary and classic science fiction. Lorde explores various styles of storytelling and her work featuring experiments in point of view voice and symbolism. She weaves threads of history and myth into the fabric of her worlds tight precise patterns filled with intention. As she told Clark's World magazine if you skim you'll miss out everything is there because it is meant to be in an NPR review. Amal El Matar praises the weight and grace to her prose writing about the Galaxy game a mouse says reading Karen lords new book feels like someone reaching into my chest pulling out a seashell and holding it to my ear with a carefully studied Grace Lord makes startling sudden connections between immigrant communities social capital assimilation and commerce that left me feeling breathless as I read in workshop this week Karen Lord has encouraged our students to narrate and record their work bringing a new dimension to the experience and highlighting the exceptional qualities of each writer's unique voice. By hearing each others speak their stories. The students who were strangers merely weeks ago become more deeply tied to one another's modes of storytelling. Tonight we hope you will discover such a connection to Karen Lorde and her work. Please join me in welcoming her this evening.

[00:08:46] That was fabulous. I kind of want to hire her and take her home and you know you can keep doing that for me a time. Thank you so much. And thank you of course to declare in the West for forgive me this opportunity to be here and to the Seattle Public Library as well for allowing me to share some of my work with you.

[00:09:06] I have been billed as a person who will tell you about Caribbean speculative fiction and before I plunge and I just want to say well what is that. What is that strange beast. What is so particular about it now. I think that for some people diversity has to have some kind of flag. So it's going to be beaches or it's going to be dialect and it can certainly be all those things and I'm just going to plug some of them by other work which is to say the only thing I did as an editor.

[00:09:39] But there's some excellent work in new worlds old ways. Award winning authors are new authors who are becoming very well known are in that book and I'm very proud of what they produce. We did it and quite a deadline but some of the things that they came up with were amazing and I want to shout out Tobias Bickel whose work with the government in a workshop also helps some of those stories to come to light. So all of this is to say that we have a strong literary tradition and we have a sense of genre that is perhaps not as strict as your sense of genre. We have a lot of speculative fiction hiding in the literary canon and we have a lot of people who will write both realist and also write the fantastical. One may even argue that in our region sometimes we live the fantastical.

[00:10:40] So when I read to you I'm going to just choose some portions of each of my three books and I hope you can see just how how varied the voice can be and how what is Caribbean maybe shines through in the themes I'm interested in. And the kind of characters that I have but it may not be sort of exotically obvious but it's still very much rooted and where I come from and where I live.

[00:11:14] So first redemption and Indigo a rival of mine once complained that my stories begin awkwardly and untidily. I am willing to admit to many faults but I will not burden my conscience with that one.

[00:11:29] All my tales are true drawn from life and a life story is not a tidy thing. It is a half tamed horse that you seize on the run and ride with knees and teeth clenched and then you regretfully slip off as gently and safely as you can. Always wondering if you could have gone a few meters more. The ice sees this tale starting with a hot afternoon in the town of area a dusty side street near the financial quarter. But I will make one concession to tradition. Once upon a time but whether a time that was or a time that is or a time is to come. I may not tell there was a man a trucker by occupation called Kwame. He had been born in a certain country in a certain year when history had reached that gray twilight in which fables of true love. The power of princes and deeds of honor are told only to children. He regretted this oversight on the part of fate. But he managed to curb his restless imagination and do the daily work that brought him the daily bread to day's work.

[00:12:50] We'll test his self restraint. How long has she been absent. He asked his clients in spite of his tact. They looked uncomfortable but that was to be expected of a housekeeper and Butler tossed by their master to trace his missing wife. A woman named Pama thirty two years replied the housekeeper.

[00:13:13] She said she was going to visit her family but the entire family has moved away from area.

[00:13:18] The Butler explained no forwarding address. The housekeeper whispered as if ashamed Mr. and seega is distraught. Kwami eyed the pair then glanced down at the papers before him. These were letters from minor Chiefs and high ranking officials politely demanding his assistance. If nothing else Mr. Van S.K. was well-connected it was a tawdry shadow of the power he dreamed of was the true love of this deserted husband similarly tarnished and what of his own honor.

[00:13:59] He was very wary of trying to find people who did not wish to be found but the names on those scraps of paper ensured that any refusal from him would not be quickly forgotten. Fairy tales and Nazi stories. His adult self said trying to sneer at the scruples before he had time to question whether it was cowardice or prudence that made him cautious do the work and stop dreaming. I'll see what I can do he sighed with a faint grimace. He had little choice. The rent of an office even in a town like area was more than his business could support and he needed this case to conclude his affairs. Honestly before he could resume his itinerant ways yearned for those days of walking free with not a Tallin man to pressure him about which case to take and which trailed to leave leaner days too. If truth be told. But Kwami had always felt liberty more satisfying than comfort poor Parmer his conscience murmured. Do you want to go back or do you prefer liberty to so that's the start of redemption.

[00:15:12] And I'm going to come back and give you a little bit of the end of it as well. And every time I read that overseas basically my accent gets a little stronger and that's the nature of this particular story because this one for me is the most overtly.

[00:15:31] It's kind of rooted in not quite in the region because it's in the fantastical version of the region. But yes this is the one that feels the most like what home looks like. So now you're going to hear my voice change the whole bit as I read to you the beginning of the best of all possible worlds. He always set aside 12 days of his annual retreat to finish reports and studies and that left 12 more for everything else. In earlier times he had foolishly tried retreats within calm reach of his workplace and that was not at all helpful. There would always be some crisis something for which his health would be required as his salary and cents increased. He took his retreats farther and farther away until at last he found himself going off planet to distant temples where the rule of silence and solitude could not be broken by convenient technologies. This season he had chosen Garvie a place with small wooden buildings scattered around a huge temple of stone all set within the rain shadow of a mountain range. An endless ocean both Vista and inspiration ran parallel to the mountains on a beach between the two offered long walks to nowhere on either side. A place of two deserts some said for sea and land were bleak together. One boundless one narrow and both thirsty. There was a place at home very like it and that had probably influenced his choice. But the sky was unique. The atmosphere was the cloudy bluish lavender of a recently formed planet and the sun was scorching bright. It was so unlike the cool strong blues and gentle sunlight of his homeworld that for the first few days he kept his head down on his door closed till nightfall.

[00:17:38] On the twelfth day he took his handheld replete with work well completed and put it in the box outside his hermitage door. He cooked and ate his evening lentils slept soundly through the night and rose to prepare his morning porridge. There was a little water leftover from the day before he was ever frugal but to Hobbie enough for washing he had to fetch the new day's supply from the box. The young acolytes of the temple always put sufficient water and food into each hermit's balls before dawn it was enough to stay clean to fill the solar pot with porridge or pottage and to sip and sleep. The constant thirst that was the natural consequence of dry air and silence the acolytes would also take away his handheld and safely transmit its contents to his workplace. But his hand-held still there he paused confused by this disconnect in the seamless order of the temple's routine. He stared at the untouched box. He looked up and frowned and puzzlement at the squat shape of the temple vaguely visible through a haze of heat blown sand and Seaspray. Then he shrugged and went on with his day a little dusty and a little thirstier but convinced that an explanation would eventually be made manifest. The following morning well before dawn the sound of the box slid closing woke him from a sleep made restless by dreams of dryness. He waited a bit then went to bring in the supplies and drink deeply of the water. His handheld was gone on a double ration of food saw in its place. He did not even peer into the darkness to catch sight of the tardy acolyte order had been restored plena.

[00:19:32] With your level of sensitivity and strength you must go on retreat regularly. So he had been told long ago by the guest master of his monastery. You are constantly looking to set things to rights even within yourself a retreat will teach you again and again that you are neither indispensable nor self-sufficient. Put bluntly learn to stop meddling commitment is important detachment equally so he congratulated himself on his developing abilities to keep curiosity in check and spent the next few days in undisturbed meditation and reflection. One day after a long morning meditation he felt thirsty and decided to get more water from his supply box. You stepped out with his glass drinking bowl in

hand and started on the edge of the box while he tilted the half lid and reached inside his hands were steady as he poured water smoothly from the heavy narrow necked moving slowly. He straightened and took a moment of blissful idleness. The jug left uncovered and his feet. When the sun's glare on the desert beach on a desert ocean and to feel the coolness of the water creeping into his palms as he held the bowl and waited to drink. It was a child's game to hold a bowl of water mark the increase of thirst with masochistic pleasure. But he did it sometimes. He brought the bowl to his mouth and had a perfect instant of pale blue ocean bright blue glass and clear water in his vision. Before he blinked sipped and swallowed many times afterwards when he tried to recall his mind would stop that vivid memory.

[00:21:26] The neatly nested colors the soothing coolness of the glass not wish to go any further.

[00:21:35] It was not long after that. Not very long until the day became horribly disordered. A man walked out of the ocean. His head darkly bright with seawater and sunlight. He wore a pilot suit iridescent sleek and permeable that would dry as swiftly as bare skin in the hot breeze. But his hair he gathered up in his hands as he approached rigging of water out from the great length of it and wrapping it high on the crown of his head with a band from his wrist. Recognition came to Lenna gradually. At first when the figure appeared it was a pilot and then as it began to walk it was a familiar pilot and finally with the added movement of hands and here it was neurology a man well known to him but not so well known as to excuse the early breaking of a retreat. He opened his mouth to chide him. Six more days neurology could anything be so important that you could not wait six more days. That was what he intended to say. But another thought came to him even for a small planet with no docking station in orbit. It was highly uncommon for a mine ship to splashdown so close to land that a pilot could swim to shore. Although he knew another Aldy there were not so close as to warrant a visit this time. And in this place the pilot slowed a step and looked uncertainly at him with eyes that streamed from the irritation of salt water. Something terrible has happened. Planet said simply. MIRALDI wiped his wet face and gave no reply. My mother was not prompted to break the silence dread growing cold and heavy in his stomach. Yes your mother neurology confirmed abruptly.

[00:23:30] Your mother and my mother and everyone our home is no more. Our world is no tenax shook his head incredulous rather than upset at the bitterness and hastened neuralgia his words. What are you seeing. You remember that he was still thirsty and he tried to raise the bowl again. But in the meantime his hands had gone chilled and numb. The ball slipped. He snatched at it but only deflected it so that it struck hard on the side. The water jug broke just in time to entangle his chasing fingers. Oh was all he said. The cut was so clean he felt nothing. I'm sorry let me. He crouched and tried to collect the larger fragments but found himself toppling sideways to rest on one knee. Neuralgia rushed forward. He drops flareups bleeding right hand yanked the band from his hair unfolded the next fist around the water fabric. Hold tight. He ordered guiding light out left hand to clamp onto his wrist. Don't let go. I'll get help. He ran off down the beach toward the temple. Plena SOTT don't care fleeing away from the broken bits of glass on obediently held tight. His head was spinning. But there was one small consolation. For at least the length of time it took Norelli to return he would remember the words of the guest master. He would not be curious he would not seek to know and he would not worry about how to write the tumbled world. So that's the beginning of best

and mind you that's not even the main voice of best the main voice of best is a very sure piece somewhat scattered very conversational and tone kind of woman.

[00:25:25] And I think sometimes when people encountered her voice first they were like what kind of story is this.

[00:25:32] But I like her voice a lot because that's just completely her character and some of my colleagues all within that line understand what it's like when a character just tells you what they're going to sound like and they refuse to have any change they will just run away with it and you just have to keep going with them so those are two beginnings for the third book. I'm not going to give you a beginning I'm going to give you something in the middle and this one shows I would say some themes that I thought of as being Caribbean but they're really kind of very global.

[00:26:13] And now that she know a little bit about pilots and mine ships is going to make more sense than if I had just given it to you straight away. You need no context. You can do this. So to friends evaluate skirted the main buildings and led her down a long walkway toward the far sea based dorm. She almost ran tugging serendipity his hand and pulling her through the doorway across the floor made of thick smoky glass and a mosaic of Blues on up to the wide open windows on the far side. She spoke aloud in her excitement is the perfect lookout point. Serendipity tried to glance at the gorgeous colors of the floor as she was hustled past most soon captivated by the promised view. Even more stunning than their first sight of Granby from the hilltop she did not have long to enjoy it. It is also a perfect place to meditate. Usually evaluate serendipity turn with the swiftness of fair and forgotten dignity. The voice was familiar the aged face of the black robed woman seated on the floor near the entrance was familiar. She had never been known to insist on any other form of address than her own simple name. And yet somehow when people spoke it they felt an irresistible urge to Addabbo alluring of the eyes or the very least a respectful lean Zeera. The two young women said their voices hushed and their heads bowed. The Cidery elder stood slowly and advanced on them with a graceful yet menacing power in her step. Evaluate haning. You are not at the council hall for the latest debates. Evolve. Honey flinched resentfully parrying seconds from saying neither were you. Then clearly thought better of it. No Zeera she said politely. But I have heard from those who were. I know what is happening. Do you Zeira inquired dogmatically. She turned her hard gaze Ansar into serendipity childish.

[00:28:26] I remember you.

[00:28:28] Have you decided to settle for us said Deery husband. Or are you ready to return to a life of monastic discipline. Serendipity was too confused and mortified to answer Zera made a noise that might have been amusement or disdain or both she turned her back on both for them and return to her position near the door. Folding her legs under her. She sat back on her ankles and stared grimly at the grass at the glass floor. Serendipity and a valley exchanged a glance and began to walk quietly to the door. They might have escaped except serendipity is downcast eyes saw a strange shadow shifting below the semi opaque glass. She halted unsure of her vision but other senses took over and she saw more clearly. There was a mine ship below the dome a fan of tendrils extended from the

main mass of the creature into the waters below them. Each tendril traced a line of subtle electricity that cut golden through the blues of water and glass. She found herself yearning for a touch of electricity zero who raised her eyes and gave serendipity a considering look what do you see. CHILD Look closely unfazed by Vivaldi's bewilderment. Serendipity knelt and pressed her face to a pale blue segment of the glass music see below move sluggishly as if thickly matted with weed and Moss but she realized it was not weed but a multitude of the mine ship's fine strong tendrils.

[00:30:15] More startling was the human shape that drifted in the midst of those tendrils serendipity steered closely.

[00:30:24] It was a pilot long dark hair streamed in the water so tangled with the mine ship's net that they moved as one in the tide. The pilot silvery suit was so badly torn that patches and strips fluttered in the current.

[00:30:41] It was possible to see even through the thick glass that the pilot was a woman. Who is she. Serendipity whispered against the cool glass. What happened to her. She did not ask the pilot was dead. She could tell that she was not even though she could not explain how she knew we know who she is. Her name is Alloh and she was last stationed on Nusa Diro as for what happened that we do not know. We hope she will be able to answer for herself someday. For now we can only wait and hope that our ship is up to the task of healing her. It is a risk a matter of legend for a mine ship to takeover and restore the body of a pilot. But I believe you have witnessed a precedent for this in your own community. Of course the elders of Arthur had shown councillor Lenna how to extend the bodies of self and healed a woman who would become his wife. Sorry spoiler serendipity straightens loading sat back and thought Sara began to speak the habitual command in her voice tempered by sadness. I remember what it was like on you said Saadia. We tried so many things to move past the point of crisis desperate planning strong structures the illusion of certainty kind lies but eventually we became ruthless and ranked people by their usefulness and their degree of compliance. These are not helpful criteria for an old woman like myself so I chose to take my chances with the new settlement on Cygnus beta.

[00:32:35] I did wonder what would happen to the ones whose lack of compliance outweighed their usefulness. We have heard some tales from the second wave of refugees Nehlen Poon Artim. This however is an example come directly home to chase and thus for our inaction. She stood wearily evolve Hani tried to attend the council meetings especially during the strange changing times listen to the contemplatives as well as the good wives inaction will cost us dearly on ignorance. Even more so.

[00:33:14] Serendipity she trailed off for a moment puzzled pondering.

[00:33:21] Think about your place in this community either here or Hertha. I will be in both places from time to time and I can advise if you will listen serendipity stood beside a valley and watched the venerable elder depart a random realization came to her. She had not given any thought to Rafie for over an hour. She looked down at her feet still seeing and sensing the floating pilot tangled in the nerves of a main ship perhaps temporarily perhaps forever.

[00:33:58] She wondered what it felt like.

[00:34:06] Thank you. It's always a challenge to find a bit from the Galaxy game to rido does not let completely drop up in other parts of the book. But I do like that one because to combine it with the opening you have a planet that was basically you know the biosphere was destroyed as uninhabitable for a time. The people who survive are the ones who were ready off planet various. Diplomats pilots people who were on retreat and they are now as it were in a position where they represent the last of their people. And there is a kind of a kind of desperation that shapes how they move on from there. So they do find a place which is new CD-ROM and tries to rebuild and some go to Cygnus better and try to make a settlement there with some previous immigrants from the same planet but then the new Sadir group become quite changed in their culture and ethos because they are pretty much focused on growing their population which is an approach that tends to not value women more. But sometimes value them less and the place of the elders who are not childbearing and who do not have that kind of power becomes precarious the female elders and all of this begins to come to a head in the Galaxy game in a very slow and complicated way. And it turns into a lot of politics a little bit of economics but quite a lot of politics. But I do like I do like the story but that's why I always ask people to read the best of all possible worlds first before the Galaxy game so that you have a better sense of what the universe is and how it works.

[00:36:08] So now that I have given you a taste of how the Caribbean speculative fiction voice can very I'm going to give you a taste of ending's by reading to you. What I would call the not the final but maybe the penultimate part of redemption and. Now I have come at last to the end of the story. For some in my audience a tale is like a riddle to be solved at the end. To them I say the best tales leave some riddles unanswered and some mysteries hidden get used to it. For others the tale is a way of living vicariously enjoying the adventures of others having to go one step beyond your sphere of comfort. Their sphere of comfort to them I say. What's stopping you from getting on a ship and sailing halfway around the world. Tales are meant to be an inspiration not a substitute. Then there are those who utterly utterly fear the dreaded moral of the story. They consider it an affront to their sensibilities and a painful presumption on the part of the storyteller. They are put off by the idea that a story might have anything useful to say and as a result all the other Joy is a tale has to offer them are immediately Saward I save my most scathing remarks for them do you go through life with your eyes blindfolded and your ears stopped.

[00:37:42] Everything teaches. Everyone preaches. All have a gospel to sell. Behar the one who is honest and open in declaring an agenda than the one who fools you into believing that they are only spinning a pretty funny scene for beauty's sake. I was honest and open.

[00:37:59] Don't you remember I told you from the very beginning that it was a story about choices wives choices foolish choices small yet momentous choices poor choices comes change. A change comes opportunity and both change and opportunity are the very cutting edge of the power of chaos.

[00:38:21] And yet as the undying ones know and as humans too often forget even chaos cannot overcome the power of choice. I have no way of knowing which of these characters will most capture your attention and sympathy. Pama will be too tepid and mild a heroine for some chance will be too cold. The Trickster too odd patients too distant in stories as life.

[00:38:48] It is an impossible task to please everybody.

[00:38:51] But before you dismiss them I ask those who care for the weak to look at patients and see their own professional distance so essential for maintaining their own strength amid the trials of many look to the trickster to see your eccentricities your talent for mercy.

[00:39:12] Deep hidden underneath a fearsome exterior to chance for your self centeredness self pride and despair. Anupama for your sense of familial duty.

[00:39:27] And yes I think I can get you to admit that you may not like my people but you cannot fail to recognize them.

[00:39:36] Do I have stories to tell. There are always more stories I could tell you about how Giana grew up and became a famous choreographer who captures some of the dance movements of dreamland for the waking world.

[00:39:48] I could give you the amusing tale of what happened when Neylon Alten did finally have a daughter. And then there are sadder more serious histories like the account of the general's war or the not always lucky and terribly volatile adult life of Djavan the boy who met a Baku I can give you any tale you like and some that you might not like but which would still be to your benefit.

[00:40:19] And yet it is terribly dry and thirsty work. Speaking these lives into the dusty air of the court speaking for you to hear and ponder and judge perhaps if he would be so kind as to contribute I could purchase some refreshments. Find a place to rest my head later I'll return to you on the morrow with my voice a memory and strength restored. Please ladies and gentlemen if you have at all enjoyed my story. Be generous as the pot goes round and do come back again soon.

[00:40:57] I was short changed you have I should have gone on for longer.

[00:41:01] Oh I feel as if those capture at for me some of my favorite bits and bits of voice and character and theme and so forth. And

[00:41:16] If there's anyone here who has read one of these three books and has a favorite part that they want me to read that's the that's my freebie to you.

[00:41:29] Yes all so again I'm going to give you no context but is a scene that you're going to get what you need to get from it. So this is chance on PAMA together traveling no women on shots noted. I've given you a kind of visibility they will see what they will immediately forget who and what they

have seen. You watched Pama each struggling to step right on the surging deck. Try not to stumble into anyone here remarked. That's a little harder to forget. Pama Delta did the crew members were busy.

[00:42:14] They moved quickly with the purposefulness that purposefulness of colleagues who know precisely what their place and function in the large machine but there was a touch of nervous exhilaration in their enthusiasm and preoccupation on every face.

[00:42:31] A storm is coming she guess. He nodded. Are you afraid she said her face sternly and replied.

[00:42:39] I choose not to be. Thank you. Are they all going to die. Not all. Not even many. Watch he Folland her a semi sheltered spot as she settled in with her back braced against the boards and her feet pressed against the thick coils of rope. It was better to be seated for now. Even the sailor stumbled from the motion of the turbulent waves. Pama began to hate. Chance for his talent and keeping dry for the second time in 24 hours she was drenched Wolf's salt water and rainwater poured over her and pulled under her. She was thoroughly thoroughly miserable. I'm so self-absorbed that it was a shock when he spoke to call something to her attention. Look by the upper deck. Lightning struck. Several men fell flat on their faces some from the shock of the noise. Others actually stunned them haven't been too close to that massive surge of power. See that one chomps pointed whether he had been blasted up there or had fallen. Palmer could not tell but a man hung tangled in lines halfway up the mainmast either dead or unconscious. She began to reach towards the bag at her house for the stick.

[00:43:55] The Captain Les not so fast shot cautioned.

[00:44:00] Holding back her hand. But he may be alive. There's a chance that lightning will strike again before they get him down. Pama protested. Trust me he said unexpectedly. The issue is not life or death. This time something more men were slow to move. Still shocked by the force of the bolt of lightning. But one man one sleek wet dark figure went climbing up the mast a knife was held clenched maniacally grinning teeth making him look like a pantomime pirate. He reached the Hanging Man took the blade and the hand and drove it into the mass wood before gingerly leaning out and catching a trailing line to haul the inert body towards him. Isn't that rare. It's not beautiful. Pama looked back in shock at chomps his face and voice had never been so animated. So her expression his face fell. You don't understand. You can't see it. Keep watching. I will explain later. The rescuer pulled his knife free and began to cut his comrades loose from the tangled ropes as he did so. Pama began to feel a sense of something about to happen something beyond human capacity to prevent. No. She breathed. I must stop it. Pama let it be. His hand blocked hers gently not forcefully leaving it leaving her the freedom to shake it off and grab the stick if she wished.

[00:45:28] Pama looked at the boy distracted. She looked at the young man he was pointing out and thus she never saw the movement and lightning striking twice in the same place blasted the two men from the mast. She did see the young man's expression. It was too intense even when compared to

the blaze of light that illuminated it. She felt Sered chards began to speak quickly. The young man is the son of a man who was injured in the ropes. He has just seen his father's avowed enemy and lifelong rival give up his life to try to save him. This chart's moment changes him for all time. Didn't I hear you tell before that you can't tell what people are thinking. She snapped at him. How do you know he's changed. How can you claim to know the future in which you will build out of his own choices. I claim no such thing but what I can see is how likely those choices will be and I can tell you Pama many will be saved in the future when this man goes to war as a general because of this. One time he saw what it means to treat an enemy with love and honor

[00:46:50] I'm always really impressed when people choose the reading because sometimes they choose things that you don't even expect and then you read it yourself and you're like oh yeah yeah that is kind of cool.

[00:47:04] So thank you for that.

[00:47:06] Well I believe that we have time for a Q and aim. So if there are any questions from the are comments even she is curious to know what writers are reading.

[00:47:19] She wants to know what I'm reading right now.

[00:47:22] Oh man.

[00:47:25] It's been a challenge to me to be reading for pleasure because so much of my reading now is bound up with my work. But I would say that there are I've been very much immersed in more of carbon literature. I recently had the honor to be on the jury for the Burt Award for Young Adult Caribbean literature and we managed to resume some fascinating manuscripts.

[00:47:51] I know that one of them is is agentive right now and out looking for a home and it's called my fishy step mom. It's about a woman who realizes that ball a woman sorry a girl realizes that the woman who is trying to flirt with her father is actually a vengeful spirit from the ocean. But of course they take her resistance as her just not wanting anybody to replace her dead mother.

[00:48:20] So there's this whole story about that and this really be that nicely done. So that's one thing I've been reading and beyond to sort of quote unquote work related things. I do find especially if I'm starting to write myself a lot more rather than read in my own genre. I end up looking at other forms of creative creative work.

[00:48:45] So I find myself listening to music a lot more especially things like jazz in the background and so forth.

[00:48:50] I find myself following a lot of online comics like Girl Genius and got to create court and those give me enough of creativity but they're so different from what I'm doing that I don't feel as if I might be inadvertently absorbing something that I would then not quite plagiarize. But it kind of steers

you off of what you might have spontaneously come up with yourself. So sorry about that if you had asked me what do I recommend that would have been a different answer.

[00:49:22] What do I recommend.

[00:49:25] I am quite a fan of Tesla Gratten who has a book called right now called the queens of inus Lir which is a rec'd retelling of King Lear.

[00:49:36] It is a lovely devastating kind of cruel poetic book that it is a very immersive experience. I had the pleasure of curbing it but I was just

[00:49:53] I was sometimes blurb a colleague's work and there's a mixture of pleasure and utter envy that you can have to work through and I'm always really impressed with her ability to handle some very very complex world building storylines yet still make her characters so incredibly bright and so incredibly attractive that even the villains are rooting for and myself rooting for.

[00:50:24] I honestly don't mean the kind of or this bad boy kind of way. This is some real complex psychology that she unpacks where she was she looks at their motivations. So you are right alongside both the hero protagonist and the villain protagonist Gus.

[00:50:45] Jay is asking me about some of the descriptions of physical activities in my book so water are like physical hobbies. The reason I started to laugh is that I have sometimes taken up something just to learn how to do it to write prop in a book. There was my archery phase which which was really kind of nice but I am a small person with not a lot of upper body strength so it probably not likely to continue for much longer. And yes I have like occasionally just just trail walking down the horseback riding thing. I used to do fencing as an undergrad and later on and I've also done a fair amount of time she and mushroom and there's also sword work and that and stuff and so forth. And that has been fascinating because Jim mentioned that I write for Trump N10 who knows what Trump and Turness OK let me tell you what Joe Montana is so I don't Kushnir wrote an amazing book called sword's point.

[00:51:46] Which was I guess I guess we kind of call it minor punk now because that it's sort of light on the magic. But you've basically created a world sort of part three musketeers time part medieval England and people have serious jewels and the nobles higher swordsmen to wear a coat. They're questions of honor and sores point is mainly about the swordsman and his lover who is an academic on the whole society is just casually bisexual because that's how they roll. And it's it's fascinating because you get a lot of politics. There's all kinds of you know stuff happening in terms of who's in power and trying to keep control of things. And there's a duchess in there called the duchess of trem on 10 a.m. 110 is the prequel to sword's point and it is produced as serial fiction by cereal box. We're on to Season Four now but there plenty of time to catch up. And we recently had a lovely character by the name of Aisha who comes from a sort of analogue of Sri Lanka and she does a form of sword dancing which is part martial art part prayer and I did in fact find myself at a certain point you know having to write a scene for her and taking out my sword and like blocking some movements as it were

because you want to you want to have something that feels right and sometimes just doing the motion you're stuck gets into your head and then you can write it.

[00:53:28] And then the final thing which I'll mention that I haven't written a book yet for fiction but I wrote an essay about it and the essay is going to be published in Scotland for the Edinburgh National Book Festival and that is Cerf's ski I who I'm afraid the ocean how I've got myself out onto the water the paddle on a narrow narrow narrow kayak that catches waves and I am learning to keep balanced and to move at great speed in very deep water and it is completely exhilarating.

[00:54:03] I live in Ireland so I might as well do some stuff with the ocean Carette yes.

[00:54:12] How so.

[00:54:18] We can multitask. We've got musicians you've got science fiction writers you know well that's actually an excellent question and I'll say two things to that. First of all when you live in a small place it's like living in a small house. You learn to look out of your window a lot. If you're in a big house you know you're always inside the rooms there's always stuff inside to entertain you. When you're in a small house you look out the window so you are aware of what's happening in the world you're aware of the globe you've got family all over the place so nothing is really strange to you. So that's the first thing. But the second thing and this was something I discovered very very slowly is that the way human beings are we all carry are small islands with us.

[00:55:04] When I was in Venezuela and trying to get by on very poor Spanish and learning Spanish my tutors set me to learn to read.

[00:55:15] Hundred Years of Solitude in Spanish and I was absolutely struck at how the village of Macondo was so much like island life they could. It was still possible because it was on a continent to travel somewhere else but people chose mostly to stay in this small location almost as if they were surrounded by water.

[00:55:41] And this is fascinating to me. And then when I looked at Venezuela itself it was a city of about eight million people but I'm hope there are no Venezuelans here to become offended but this is actually what I discovered about only two million people really knew each other because of the stratification of class and who had money and who didn't. So it made me think to myself you know we still end up forming our own tight communities that can be as isolated as geographical islands and the person who's cosmopolitan might be the person from the island rather than the person who's in the city because we're looking out of our windows oh sorry I also want to give that. That's Tobias Bacall's answer. I think it's an excellent one. Science fiction sometimes is about the future. If you say that island people who are islands don't have a right in science fiction you're basically saying they can't imagine themselves in the future. So there is something very revolutionary about writing a future where you see yourself and not just see yourself but see something of your culture and your way of life preserved. What is it going to look like. Nello Hopkinson Hasbrouck called Midnight Robber. One thing she's done and that absolutely tickles me on a deep deep level is the dialect you see in Ben

Knight Rahbar is a future version of West Indian dialects. She has combined aspects of Jamaican nation language and Trinidadian patois and Guyanese dialect and created a new dialect out of it that's instantly recognisable to all of us in the West Indies. But we also know that it's a blend and I just a tiny little thing and I think about 80 percent of people who read will never notice it but I bet I see that it gives me deep pleasure.

[00:57:37] Because again it's a bold what are we going to be like generations from now. Well the reason why redemption turned out as it was is that the original folktales from West Africa and I've never been to West Africa. But of course there's a lot of you could say survived memory of the culture in our in our region.

[00:58:01] So I changed the name of the location of the fort till I expanded the location of the fort till to make it like as if the West Indies was a continent and as if that continent had never known colonialization and that was my way of having my cake and eating it too.

[00:58:27] But I have written short stories that are very definitely in Barbados. They tend to be for local and regional publications. Sometimes they get reprinted elsewhere. Sometimes I'm surprised when they're reprinted elsewhere because like you understand all this and they let you know how we get it. So you can't always assume that because you're writing something very intimate that it means that it's not accessible to anyone else.

[00:58:51] I have a kind of a quasi ghost story that takes place in Queens Park Bonymy and parks in town with people playing dominoes.

[00:59:03] I get more Caribbean so so you know that's just one that's called haunts and it's in them.

[00:59:10] Literature for the 21st century. And then there's another one I wrote. OK I'm going to brag. This is a good break. This is a story I wrote. I don't think I don't take is one of my best stories but I think the concept is a good story. And it's very much a future West Indies but it is something really really scary. I imagined a Barbados that was completely devastated by a disaster and one of the reasons I did that is we really have precedent we have Monserrat for those who don't know Monserrat is a Caribbean country that ended up being a two thirds uninhabitable because the volcano exploded and continued to explode in a very almost anomalous we saw that there was no kind of rebuild that could happen for a very long time and the result was that Monserrat mind you not an independent country is still a Kanger the proper term no British dependent territory or whatever but it was a very traumatic kind of situation to observe from afar and it was definitely traumatic for the population. Now Barbados has and this is not fiction this is reality because those doing the research a plate boundary to the east in the Atlantic which is capable of megathrust earthquakes and those who don't know what a megathrust earthquake is kind of like you know what you'll get by Hawaii by Japan and what you might get even for the Cascadia subduction zone. And those are the sort of things that if you are fairly flat island you're not on a walk away from that very easily. We have a geology where the west part of the island consists of terraces that have been gradually uplifted. I have a very good friend who is a

geography teacher who is to educate a lot of things I put in my books and I said to her Fátima how fast do these things come up.

[01:01:03] She said I don't know I I am because you can see that there are like steps. So there is a reasonably fast period of uplift. So the short story is about the next uplift because we are on the rise in plate.

[01:01:17] But when that happens dramatically and suddenly and then you're on an island that is active tectonically and then suddenly people can't really live there comfortably anymore what do you do. So then I had a real diaspora where people actually created Caribbean communities. We do have something called the Caribbean Community CARICOM where the Caribbean communities were actual constructed small nations that were mobile nations and then they eventually moved into space because they've learned how to do it on Earth. And it's called a new Panama and it's called a new Panama because many Barbadians went to the Panama Beach Panama build canal and the new Panama thing is is two references one. They end up in space because they're basically going to be responsible for that the way stations the stepping stones to the stars and the other reason is that is a quote from one of our famous authors George not and wrote a novel called In the castle of my skin and it is called The One of the characters says when talking about how there are fewer opportunities for the young men because she's talking about you know basically a big project that will give you lots of money. And that's what our history has been like. People often emigrating out because it's not enough to support the population economically. And why I said it is a bit of a brag is that the reason the story got written is because George lobbing asked me to write her for the fiftieth anniversary of this was 059 independent. So there was a special issue of them. And he said you know write a story about Barbados in the future 50 years in the future. And I really wrote about a devastated island but an expanded culture. So my answer to you is is there anyone right now writing her way and the way you want to see Hawaii written.

[01:03:11] That is up to you.

[01:03:17] Do I believe in monsters. Ok so I am a scientist.

[01:03:23] I also have a Ph.D. in sociology religion so I can't use words like believe the way you're framing it and the question so are you asked me if I have encountered a monster isn't science marvelous and I'm kind of teasing you but when I say establish what a monster is something that writers love to play with because we have often used the term of the monster who is not really a monster it's the so-called human who is the one that's the monster we were. I've also been discussing with the class how in the West Indies we do have a very close relationship with the fantastical but some of the monsters that we have the puppies in the den and the rolling cop or whatever are themselves manifestations of very deep societal trauma. I was chatting with Nahlaot Hopkinson and we were talking about rolling cough and how when you have what is basically a clanking mechanical beast with eyes of flame and you know bellowing sounds you're talking about the machinery of the sugar plantation haunting the worker as he's trying to sleep at night. This thing is coming through the village by village road coming to eat him. I mean the machinery is so dangerous that they would keep

Russia nearby to cut off from them if you got caught. And the hours were so long when they were boiling for sugar that people could fall asleep and fall into a box of boiling liquid. So there is all that fear around that and a way to express that fear is to create a monster around it so the monster does exist.

[01:05:00] But then as you say you've got to define what it is. We have ways of dealing with things on a on a mythic level that we can express fully on a personal level. Thank you. That's my Ph.D. thesis.

[01:05:16] Well parts of it anyway thank you so much.

[01:05:26] This podcast was presented by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.